

Liam Skinner
Chief Schools Officer
155 Merrimack Street
Lowell, Massachusetts 01852

LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Phone: (978) 674-2163
E-mail: lskinner@lowell.k12.ma.us

TO: Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Liam Skinner, Chief Schools Officer

DATE: November 12, 2021

RE: *Innovation Plan Reauthorization Proposal*
Career Academy and Engagement Center

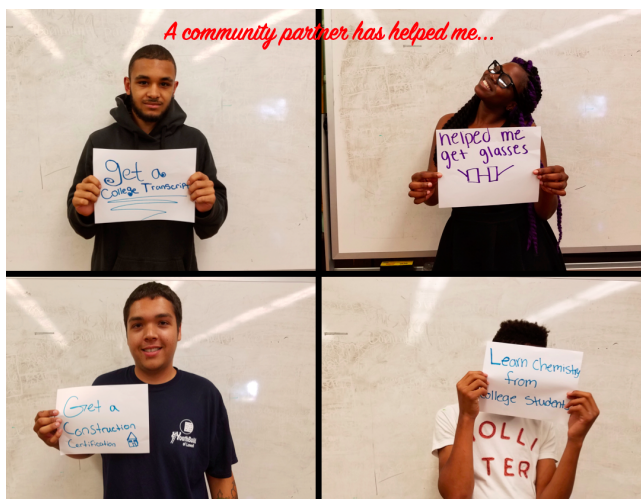
The Career Academy alternative high school and its Engagement Center credit recovery tutoring program supported 77 graduates in School Year 2020-2021—nearly 10% of the district’s graduating class. The school’s innovative model allows for a flexible and supportive environment with competency-based credit earning for students who have struggled to find success in the traditional school environment.

The Career Academy seeks a School Committee vote for renewal of its approved five-year [Innovation Plan](#) pursuant to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) 603 CMR 48.00. The Innovation Plan is a budget-neutral guiding document that operationalizes the Career Academy’s nontraditional educational model, which supports 150 of the districts’ highest need high school students annually using a student-centered approach. Reauthorization does not entail any changes to the collective bargaining agreement or existing operations of the current school model. DESE requires this as a local process to reauthorize the Innovation designation every five years following the original unanimous approval by the 2016 Lowell School Committee.

For consideration in the reauthorization process, included below are:

- a. Summary of Impact
- b. [Video of student testimonials](#) (6:41)
- c. Innovation Plan 2021

Career Academy and Innovation Plan Summary of Impact



The Career Academy and its Engagement Center program are alternative education options for high school students in Lowell Public Schools. Combined, these programs supported 77 graduates in school year 2020-2021. The total graduates supported by the Career Academy and Engagement Center account for nearly 10% of the district's senior class. All CA and EC students have faced behavioral, attendance, or academic barriers to success along their school career—many have faced all three.

Prior to the Career Academy becoming an Innovation School in 2016, the program was a short-term disciplinary program rather than a four-year comprehensive high school. Since June 2016, annual graduates of the Career Academy's full day school and the part-time Engagement Center credit recovery program have increased from 25 in 2016 to 77 in 2021.

IMPACT OF INNOVATION SCHOOL MODEL:

- 288 students graduated who were in-risk of dropping out
- 99 internship experiences, 181 college credits
- 205 free eye exams, 190 free pairs of glasses
- *Students participating in community school programs had significantly higher credit attainment between 2016-2020*

At the Career Academy, they thrive in a smaller, more personalized learning environment with access to wraparound supports from staff and community partners in the areas of health and wellness, academic enrichment, and college and career readiness. While the school continues to support students with attendance and behavioral referrals, those looking for a smaller and personalized academic setting may opt in during enrollment periods.

The Engagement Center part time credit recovery program supports seniors close to graduation who have barriers to attending the traditional school day—among them teen pregnancy and parenting, employment, and mental health needs. Students complete courses using the online platform Apex, while receiving a hybrid of remote and in-person tutoring services and social work case management.

Lowell Career Academy Innovation School Plan

Student-centered vision for 2021 and beyond

Five Year Reauthorization Plan



Primary Applicants: Megan O'Loughlin
Lauren Sumiko Campion
Lowell Public Schools

Contact Information: moloughlin@lowell.k12.ma.us | 978-970-3318
lcampion@lowell.k12.ma.us | 978-674-2066

Type of Innovation: Renewal
Date of Conversion: 7/1/2016 per Lowell School Committee
Proposed Location: 125 Smith Street, Lowell
Number of Students: 150/ 90 full-time, 60 part-time
Age Range of Students: 13 - 22 years old

Plan submitted to Lowell School Committee for approval of renewed Innovation School designation for the period of 2021-2026

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I. **Executive Summary** *(New components for renewal italicized)*

This proposal outlines the 2021 renewed vision of the Career Academy's Innovation Plan, pursuant to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 603 CMR 48.00. The Innovation School, hereafter referred to as the Career Academy, carries autonomy to serve Lowell youth by fostering a supportive, responsive learning environment that puts students in the driver's seat to their success. Through full-school implementation of its originally approved student-centered Innovation tenets—*personalized learning, redesigned student and teacher time, and wraparound services*—the Career Academy's 2021 updated plan will grow the school's capacity to prepare students to succeed in high school and beyond.

The 2016 conversion of the Career Academy from a program to an Innovation School within Lowell Public Schools expanded the opportunity for alternative forms of credit fulfillment under the competency-based assessment framework, such as off-site internships and blended learning. The addition of a full-time resource teacher, as well as the grant-funded positions of full-time community school program manager and part-time guidance counselor have supported the goals of the innovation plan.

The Career Academy's mission is for students to gain control over their learning by grounding academic curriculum in applications of real-world knowledge and skills. *The 2021 plan scales up these real-world applications from discrete programing to deeply integrated connection throughout all aspects of students' education experience to more effectively and equitably meet the needs of the whole student.*

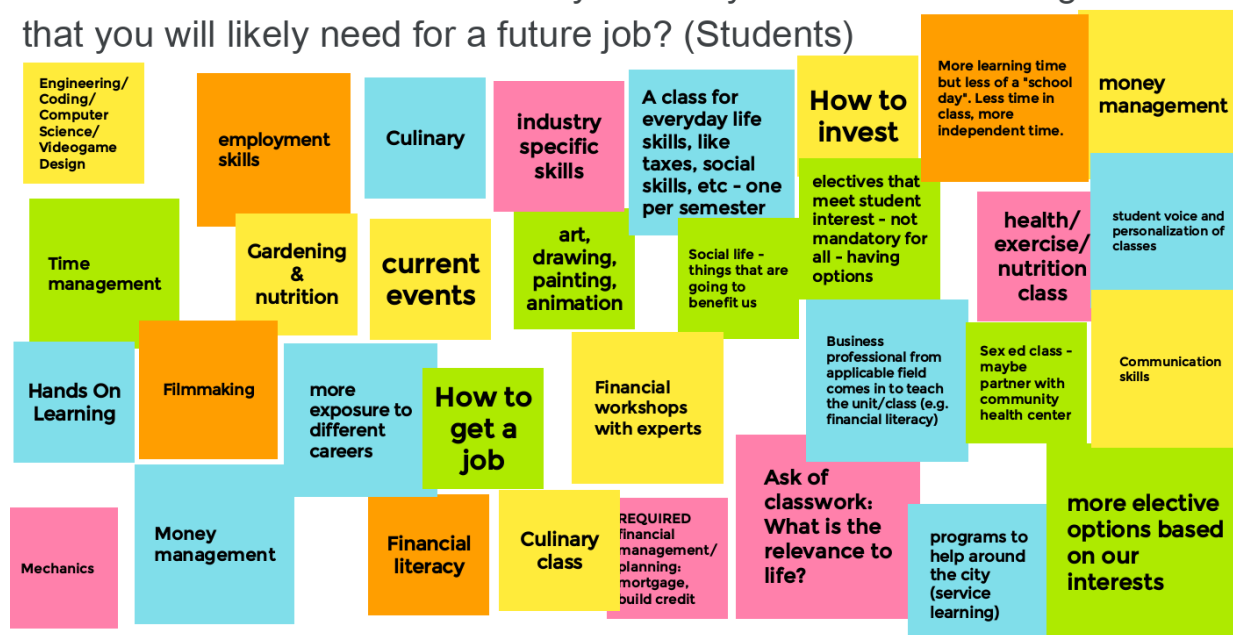
Expanding on two of the original innovation tenets, **personalized learning** and **wraparound services**, the 2021 plan includes *increased real-world lessons in students' identified priority areas (Figure 1) and additional social emotional learning curriculum*. The third tenet, **redesigned teacher and student time** will continue as written, and is more imperative than ever given the context of remote and hybrid learning models necessitated by the global Covid-19 pandemic. Original elements of the innovation plan that will continue: flexible scheduling, community partnerships, competency-based learning, schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, a capstone project in service learning, and work experience.

To guide and document their personalized high school journey, all students will use their My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP) framed in academic, soft skills, and pathways-specific competencies. This living document will be accessible to students' mentors, career pathways coach, and teachers for continuous development. Additionally, all students will be enrolled in three credits of Interdisciplinary Studies of college and career readiness and service learning via the dual enrollment program that has existed at the school since 2016.

Autonomy to deviate from the traditional curriculum and pedagogy expands opportunity for students of all backgrounds and abilities to thrive. To be a truly alternative pathway to success, students need flexible credit-earning options afforded by the Innovation Plan's approved autonomies. The continuation of a competency-based model with flexible scheduling is essential to foster better engagement, deeper learning, and ultimately, the self-efficacy for continued success within and beyond their Lowell community.

Figure 1: Career Academy students' ideas on learning, January 2021

What are some skills or activities you wish you could learn in high school that you will likely need for a future job? (Students)



II. Strategic Change Chart

Table 1: Approved autonomies and their impact on student achievement since 2016

(New components of 2021 plan are italicized)

Traditional Practice	Autonomy Areas selected from DESE Innovation Statute 603 CMR 48.00	Impact
Credit earning based on seat-time “Carnegie Unit” model	<p>Blended and Personalized Learning: Credits earned through participation in internships, service and project-based learning, experiential electives, and online competency-based credit recovery.</p> <p>Students assessed on “mastery of a common core of skills, competencies, and knowledge”¹</p> <p><i>Real-world application of learning documented in MyCAP individualized learning plan (see appendix)</i></p>	<p>Proven increased credit earning and graduation²</p> <p>Greater acquisition and understanding of real-world 21st Century skills valued by students³</p> <p>Ease of alignment to MassCore standards, competency determination</p> <p>Students develop self-efficacy and personal development habits</p>
Learning generally takes place in a classroom, 7:45 - 2:30 pm	<p>Redesigning Student and Teacher Time: Flexible student scheduling within district school day hours 7:45-2:30 and extended day/credit recovery 3:00 – 6:00</p> <p>Capstone service-learning project led by students with staff as advisor</p> <p>Remote and hybrid learning options</p>	<p>Students will have flexibility around remote, am/pm and full/part time for increased academic achievement, job placement, postsecondary education and training</p> <p>Students who have struggled in a traditional academic setting have alternative means to become successful</p>

¹ As supported by MA General Law Title XII Chapter 69 Section 1D

² Per the finding of a positive association between Career Academy students’ participation in community school programming and their credit earning, in an analysis conducted by the University of Massachusetts, Lowell Center for Program Evaluation (2019).

³ Students from both the Career Academy and Lowell High School want more real-world skills, per focus group input from the Lowell Public Schools Portrait of a Graduate project (2021)

<p>Some wraparound services available, though not embedded in school profile</p>	<p>Wraparound Zones: Build on current services in the areas of health and wellness, academic enrichment, college and career connections, adult education, and case management with legal, housing, and family service agencies. Positive Behavioral Interventions and <i>Social emotional curriculum for all students</i></p>	<p>Increase access to essential individual and family services</p> <p>Improve readiness to learn, safety and well-being of students and community</p>
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III. Public Statement

The Career Academy will continue to serve the Lowell Public Schools' alternative education population, expanding to welcome additional students who thrive in a non-traditional academic setting. It will continue to operate under a competency-based learning model with employment and wraparound services that provide students with alternative pathways to success, fostering the development of real-world skills to succeed in college and career. Located in the Lower Highlands neighborhood, Career Academy will serve Lowell Public School students ages 13 through 22 working toward their high school diplomas. Projected enrollment in school years 2021-2026 is 150 full- and part-time students annually.

IV. Student Profile

The Career Academy will serve students in Lowell and potentially surrounding communities who require a re-designed pathway leading to graduation and postsecondary success in the 21st century.

The Characteristics of a Successful Career Academy Student:

- are more comfortable in a smaller setting
- need increased academic and social-emotional support
- develop healthy peer and adult relationships with additional structures
- need flexible scheduling
- want ownership of their academics and future plan
- are able to generalize instruction for daily application
- are ready to re-engage after a having gaps in learning
- are ready to make appropriate choices after having a record of school disciplinary issues and/or are court-involved
- have previously demonstrated success in an alternative education program

V. Mission, Vision, Statement of Need, and Proposed Partnerships

A. Mission Statement

The Career Academy engages students to take control of their learning through student-led inquiry, positive relationship building, work-based learning, and wraparound supports. They acquire academic, social emotional, and industry specific competencies that transfer to real-world scenarios in their community and professional futures.

B. Vision Statement

Career Academy students are in the driver's seat on their road to success. They develop skills for personal, academic, and professional success beyond high school through a curriculum rooted in student-led inquiry, social-emotional development, and career connections. They will persevere toward their goals supported by positive relationships built with their peers, teachers, and mentors. They will explore college and career pathways through hands-on exposure to industry and fields of study, discovering their passion that will launch their post-graduation life. Graduates will continue as lifelong learners, with the relationship building, critical thinking, and field-based skills to make a positive impact on the world.

Driving Principles

1. Learning is **personalized**: driven by students and supported by positive relationships.
2. **Students make real-world connections** as they acquire a range of competencies through academic, work, and service projects.
3. **Wraparound services** support mental and physical well-being.
4. **Culturally responsive pedagogy** pervades curriculum and instruction.

C. Statement of Need

Located at the edge of Lower Highlands, Career Academy is an alternative option for students who have not found success in the traditional school setting; enrollment criteria according to its DESE district profile is “expelled, frequent truancy, involved with DYS, poor academic record, returned dropout, or suspended.”⁴ The Engagement Center, an online credit recovery program conducted with coaches’ onsite at Career Academy, currently serves over 80 students who are either earning credit recovery or need a modified schedule. The Innovation Plan will absorb the Engagement Center into Career Academy and expand online coursework offerings to all students.

As 22% of Lowell Public Schools students did not graduate with their four-year cohort in 2019, there is a clear need for a comprehensive alternative school to serve students who face continual barriers to success. 87.2% of students at the Career Academy were classified as high needs by DESE in the 2019-2020 school year, prior to the global coronavirus pandemic.

Despite enrolling the district’s highest risk students, the Career Academy has significantly improved these students’ trajectories since transitioning to a community and innovation school in School Year 2015-2016. Participation in innovative competency-based and wraparound programming at the Career Academy is associated with higher credit earning during the first five years of Innovation Status. The graduating class size of day students increased from 3 to 14 during this time, and a total of 190 graduates were served in the Career Academy and its Engagement Center credit recovery tutoring program (see Measurable Annual Goals and Innovation School Evaluation Report for further detail). It is clear that the Innovation School design change has worked.

Recognizing the importance of intrinsic motivation and the contextual significance to learning as driving principles to the educational experience can better meet students where they are at and amplify the academic experience as students will see and practice immediately applicable lessons throughout the day. The principles that acquiring long term skills depends on practice, students persist in the face of challenging tasks and process information more deeply when they adopt mastery goals rather than performance goals and that student creativity can be fostered (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Following an academic career plagued by in- and out-of-school challenges, students often arrive at Career Academy disengaged with their education and eager to begin employment. However, they are unable to attain employment without the minimum requirement of a high school diploma and often lack the work-readiness skills needed to sustain it. The competency-based component of the Career Academy’s

⁴ DESE (2020). The Career Academy. *School and District Profiles*.

Innovation Plan will engage students to take ownership of their learning, and the postsecondary pathways will foster connections to life beyond high school. In this way, they will graduate with the relevant credentials *and* 21st century skills to succeed.

D. Primary Proposed Partnerships

The following agencies will support the planning team in the continued implementation of the Innovation Plan:

Wraparound Support: Many of our [Community School](#) partnerships overlap in service area objectives of the proposed Innovation School plan, including Elevate mentoring and future planning, a comprehensive vision service, Mill City Grows garden and nutrition education, the Bike Connector bike refurbishing program, Green Dragons martial arts and cross training, and the Lowell Community Health Center Please see Section X for the full list of contracted partners and their associated programs.

Social Emotional Learning The Career Academy believes all students need to feel as if they are cared for physically and emotionally if they are to succeed in an educational context. High school aged students are facing a significant increase in negative mental health outcomes during the global coronavirus pandemic. Moreover, students of minority identity have an increased likelihood of experiencing school based victimization and identity based victimization which has direct correlations to both negative mental health outcomes and decreased school performance (Price et al. 2019). To address this need, the Career Academy will continue its seven-year partnership with the Center for Behavioral Education and Research at the University of Connecticut to advance our capacity as a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support school. Additionally, a highly-qualified school social worker is currently training teachers to implement ONEder Academy social emotional curriculum in their advisory course.

Work-Based and Pathways Programing: The MassHire Career Center and Elevate New England work closely with the Career Academy in a Pathways Coaching model that provides students with one-on-one and group support in job acquisition, internship placement, mentoring, and future planning.

Strategic Support: Project LEARN, an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to help the Lowell Public Schools improve student outcomes, will develop a sustainability model for Career Academy. Project LEARN was the strategic consultant for the Full Service Community School grant and works closely with the Career Academy to advance its mission of supporting students to find their own success through a network of comprehensive and targeted supports.

VI. Autonomy and Flexibility To Improve School Performance and Student Achievement

A. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The Career Academy will continue to offer flexible credit-earning options that address the DESE Innovation School priority areas of ***Blended and Personalized Learning and Redesigning Teacher and Student Time***. DESE education regulations allow for fulfillment of structured learning time requirements outside of a traditional classroom setting,⁵ Experiential learning that is guided by students' personal interests fosters growth in multiple domains, as outlined in Section II Strategic Change Chart. Further, students are assessed based on their completion of core competencies in each course. These competencies

⁵ 603 CMR 27.07 Structured Learning Time Requirements states that “structured learning time may include directed study, independent study, technology-assisted learning, presentations by persons other than teachers, school-to-work programs, and statewide student performance assessments.”
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr27.htm>

align with MassCore state education standards and ensure students are equipped with the skills for postsecondary success.

During the first five years of Innovation status, the school's model of flexible, competency-based, and experiential credit-earning model had a positive effect on the number of credits students earned.

Competency-Based Education

Overview

To ensure students are prepared with the knowledge and skills to succeed after high school, teachers will move toward a competency-based system of teaching and learning. Assessing students based on content mastery is an approach supported by MA General Law: Title XII Chapter 69 Section 1D⁶ and promulgated by education thought leaders as a means to better preparing students for postsecondary success.⁷

In a traditional model, a student can learn 65% of the material in a class and pass with a D. The remaining 35% of knowledge is a learning gap that provides a weakened foundation for future coursework and will ultimately result in poor performance on future standardized exams. The competency-based model ensures that all students are promoted as they master material, rather than based on age or grade level. This model enables teachers to systematically address learning gaps from previous schooling and ensure that all students are acquiring the essential skills and subject matter to succeed in the 21st century.

Career Academy's transition to competency-based education enables personalized learning for the district's highest-risk students, progressing as they are ready and maintaining their dignity if that pace is slower than that of their peers. Further, the process of mapping out, working toward, and achieving defined skills necessary for a high school diploma fosters a sense of ownership that can carry over in future academic and/or employment pursuits.

Prior to the implementation of this model in 2016, The Career Academy consulted with multiple alternative schools across the state that use the competence-based education model, including lead Innovation Planning partner the Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA), the New Liberty Salem Innovation School, and the Charlestown High School Diploma Plus Program. Teachers use competencies and benchmarks in all subject areas currently offered.

The 2021-2026 Innovation Plan will deepen competency-based learning by mapping all learning opportunities to real-world knowledge and skills. Students will "collect" competencies through their classroom and field experience and document them in their MyCAP with staff support, mirroring a resume building process that breaks down the silos between school and their real-world identity development.

Intake

Career Academy's intake process will use students' prior academic records and an online competency assessment tool, iReady, to place students into appropriate class levels and identify students who will need tier 2 or 3 support. Students with the greatest academic needs will continue to receive individualized

⁶ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1D>

⁷ e.g. Big Picture Learning, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Transcend Education, JFF

support from existing staff structure that includes two special education teachers and one English Language Learner teacher.

Assessment

Teachers are expected to use both formative and summative assessments as part of their regular practice. In order to earn benchmarks, students must show evidence of learning through tests, projects, papers, performance tasks, and portfolio-style assessments. Students complete an annual dual-enrollment capstone project in service learning that incorporates core academic competencies, community connections, and work competencies (collaboration, public speaking, project management). Grades are determined by a combination of factors, including: Quantity of benchmarks earned; Combination of benchmarks at “different levels”; Depth of completion of benchmarks (benchmarks earned at HC rating); Completion of specific assignments/projects that employ higher order thinking; Any other measure that is directly related to the depth of a student’s understanding of benchmarks, competencies, or themes for the class. A Pass/Fail system applies to work-based learning credit earning.

Graduation Requirements

Curriculum benchmarks will be grouped by modules that, when combined, align with Lowell High School’s grading system. The benchmarks and competencies and their related courses are mapped to match or exceed the current graduation requirements from Lowell High School. However, the physical education requirement continue as two courses (5 credits), as there is no specific requirement named in MassCore. In accordance with Massachusetts graduation requirements, students need to earn a passing grade on the MCAS in order to graduate.

Blended Learning

Blended learning has proven to be an effective means of engaging non-traditional students.⁸ The Engagement Center will continue to offer afternoon and evening options for students to earn credits toward their high school diploma through Apex Learning course software. With the addition of the resource teacher, Career Academy will offer students access to the learning lab (Engagement Center) throughout the day. Students will have the opportunity to work on-line with teacher/tutor coaches.

Providing students with flexible means to earning credit is encouraged by DESE’s education regulations. Toward this end, Career Academy school day will expand existing opportunities that allow students to earn credits through a variety of learning formats. The school day will include traditional teacher-facilitated courses toward MassCore’s recommended program of studies,⁹ as well as a variety of non-traditional courses outlined below:

Postsecondary Pathways

Work-based Learning: Career Academy currently implements postsecondary work-readiness that includes in-school internships and after-school/summer job acquisition, soft-skills acquisition, community job shadowing days, and a professional speaker series. The career pathways framework is bolstered through

⁸ Recommended as a “promising practice” for improving educational attainment by UMass Donahue: <http://www.donahue.umassp.edu/news-events/institute-news/promising-practices-for-online-credit-recovery-courses>

⁹ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccr/masscore/>

partnerships with the Masshire Career Center of Lowell, Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board, Elevate New England, Project LEARN, and these partners' local networks.

College Dual-Enrollment: Career Academy instructors and Elevate New England offer three Interdisciplinary studies credits via Middlesex Community College (MCC): a First Year Experience orientation course, which aims to identify students' strengths and prepare them with the skills to succeed in college and employment, a Career Explorations course which exposes students to different various career pathways and soft-skill work-readiness, and a Service Learning project capstone. Additionally, students may take the freshman level English Composition 1 and Math Ramp-Up courses via concurrent enrollment (college instructors) and receive field experience credit for certificate programs (e.g. Early Childhood Education) through the Career Academy's internship program.

Extended Day Programming

The Career Academy offers enrichment courses aligned to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program model. Students may enroll in one or more afternoon courses to earn elective credits. A student interest inventory conducted in 2015 and 2017 yielded high desire for courses in areas such as photography, music production, culinary arts and computer programming, and additional areas such as financial literacy in a 2020 focus group (Figure 1). These courses are staffed through both contracted community partners and LPS teachers following the 21st Century CCLC model.

C. Staffing and Schedule

Staffing Ratios

The Career Academy will maintain a maximum of a 15:1 student teacher ratio, with the exception of blended learning courses, which will have a maximum ratio of 20:1.

Collective Bargaining Agreement

Career Academy does not seek staffing autonomies outside the collective bargaining agreement between the United Teachers of Lowell and the Lowell Public Schools District. Career Academy seeks the following staffing autonomies pursuant to the Innovation School Regulations 603 CMR 48.00:

- Any changes in teacher's school day start time and end time will be negotiated through the United Teachers of Lowell.
- The flexibility for staff throughout the district to be afforded the opportunity to tutor students beyond the school day.

With core academic subjects confined to the morning and late afternoon through blended learning, teachers will have increased availability for common and individual planning time and professional development. They may also apply to teach or facilitate afternoon programing such as extended day program classes or online credit recovery.

Career Academy educators will maintain their relationship with the United Teachers of Lowell and the Lowell School Administrators Association. All personnel's collective bargaining agreements will be honored as members of Career Academy staff.

Hiring will follow LPS' two-way process; the school's administration will take part in the decision to hire, and hired teachers may elect to work at the school with an understanding of its alternative structure and methodology.

Career Academy will follow the LPS school year calendar. A four-week summer program will run during July and August.

D. Professional Development

All teachers will receive professional development in the areas of competency-based education, trauma sensitivity and Positive Behavioral Intervention Systems. Please see Part V. Section B. for further details. The professional development protocol will remain consistent with LPS district requirements of a \$30/hour stipend rate for voluntary attendance. All other professional development opportunities will align with the current collective bargaining agreement.

E. District Policies and Procedures (No change from approved 2016 Innovation Plan)

Policy or Procedure	2015 and Prior	2016-2026 Autonomous Policy or Procedure
Referral Process	<p>Inconsistency in referral process, push-out model</p> <p>Discipline and Placement Meetings</p> <p>Students transferred at any point in school year consistent with Special Education, 504, 37H, 37H 1/2, and disciplinary placement regulations</p>	<p>Updated Referral Form and TAT protocol followed with fidelity for inclusive and appropriate placement decisions, opt-in model</p> <p>Meetings through house offices to include Career Academy staff, student, family and service providers</p> <p>Students enter The Career Academy day program at the start of the grading period and The Engagement Center on a rolling basis</p>
Credit Earning Options	<p>Students have the option of earning internship and work-study credits</p> <p>Students have flexible scheduling that meet their individual needs: e.g., modified day, extended day courses, online credit recovery (in-person and at-home)</p>	<p>Expand on existing opportunities for diverse and flexible credit earning by engaging staff and community partners as facilitators. Does not require deviation from current district policy</p>
Promotion/ graduation standards	<p>Students have promotion option at the end of each semester, 5th-year seniors may graduate at the end of fall semester</p>	<p>Students may graduate on the semester based on competency, regardless of length of enrollment at the Career Academy</p>
Attendance	<p>Students may receive attendance credit on days they have participated in credit-bearing coursework—offsite internships, work study, project-based learning, and other distance learning opportunities. Attendance codes are to-be-determined and will adhere to Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regulations.</p>	

Family Involvement	School Site Council, ongoing family text, call, email, and in-person communication, survey input, and culturally-focused celebratory events.
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F. Budget

FY2022 Career Academy District Allocation

The Career Academy will adhere to Lowell Public Schools budgeting policies and procedures. According to state Innovation School regulations, “Innovation Schools are intended to be a **fiscally-neutral** reform option” (DESE).

The following fiscal autonomies of the Career Academy Innovation Plan were approved by the Lowell School Committee and authorized by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in 2016:

1. The autonomy to raise and spend funds from grants, private fundraising, and third-party sources.
- ~~2. The autonomy to establish a non-profit organization that will serve as a fundraising arm of the Career Academy. Funds raised will not impact the district’s financial contributions from Lowell Public Schools.~~
- ~~3. The autonomy to retain and spend a portion of all tuition and fees collected from out of town students for the betterment of the Career Academy.~~

Autonomy 1 has allowed for the acquisition and management of \$2.1 million of grant funding through federal, state, and local sources since school year 2015-2016. Fiscal autonomies 2 and 3 require additional protocol and are not requested in the renewal plan of 2021.

Access to District Services:

The Career Academy will continue to access special education team services from the district. This includes an ETC, School Psychologist, Social Worker, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist and Speech/Language Pathologist.

The Career Academy will continue to receive district level curriculum support, access to interpretation services and district-supported professional development.

The Career Academy will continue to access the district’s day-to-day substitute pool for teacher sick days and professional development absences.

As a Lowell Public School, the Career Academy will continue to have access to district support staff including legal, attendance, homelessness, special education, and additional services.

The Career Academy students will continue to have access to enrichment programs offered to all high school age students including MIAA athletics, and clubs.

VII. Capacity of Applicant Group

The Career Academy has historically possessed limited resources to serve the district's highest risk population. However, over the past eight years, LPS has acquired substantial funding to bolster it. Gateway Cities awarded the district with \$40,000 in January 2013 to transform the Career Academy from a short-term probationary placement to a comprehensive high school. The school implemented multi-tiered interventional support called Positive Behavior Interventions System (PBIS) to more effectively address student conduct issues. In 2015, in collaboration with Project LEARN, the school department applied for and received a grant of \$2.5 million from the US Department of Education's Full Service Community Schools initiative. Aligned to DESE's priority autonomy **Wraparound Zones**, the fifteen cross-sector partners of this initiative have begun transforming the Career Academy into a community hub that addresses out-of-school barriers to success. We have also benefited from an additional \$148,000 of state and local grant funds as well as in-kind support of partners and volunteers during this period of growth.

Since 2015, the Career Academy has made measurable steps to better serve the alternative education population in Lowell. During this time, the Career Academy was rebranded and re-opened as a long-term, four-year high school program after serving as a "revolving door for dropouts" for many years prior. The support of students, staff, families, and community partners have gradually transformed the public perception of the Career Academy as it has become a guidepost for non-traditional student success and a hub for community partnership. By capitalizing on diverse partners and federal, state, and local grants, we have developed a deep innovative school model with elements that meet identified needs in the areas of mental and physical health, education attainment, employment, and pathways to success.

As mentioned, many FSCS partners overlap in service area objectives of the proposed Innovation School plan. Additionally, the planning process will yield a comprehensive sustainability scope that assures the Career Academy will be sustainable under the budget-neutral stipulation of the Innovation Plan.

VIII. Timetable for Development and Establishment (Approved June 2016)

A. Planning Phase

This Innovation Plan was created by the Innovation Planning Team listed in Section VII. The current renewal proposal was updated with stakeholder input on priorities and vision from the School Site Council as well as student forums over the course of the 2020-2021 school year. See Appendix for implementation timetable.

B. Implementation Phase

Initial approval of the 2016 Innovation Plan converted the Career Academy program into a student-centered, comprehensive school. It combined under one governance structure the Career Academy and the Engagement Center, an online dropout reengagement and credit recovery program that took place during extended learning time in the evening and summer hours, as well as remotely and remotely. The rationale for this merger is that both programs serve students who are disengaged and/or underserved in the traditional academic setting; they require an alternative approach to meet their unique needs. Total annual enrollment is 150 full- and part-time students.

Year Two projected the addition of two staff positions—a guidance counselor and a resource teacher—to enable the Career Academy to operate as a fully free-standing high school within Lowell Public Schools. A resource teacher was acquired through site-based budgeting. Until acquisition of a full-time positions, a part-time guidance counselor will be funded through grant sources and the current relationship of LHS Guidance staff supporting the Career Academy will continue. Once separated, the Career Academy has maintained ongoing partnership with LHS to ensure a streamlined student referral protocol that includes student-centered multi-step process of intervention to ensure appropriate placement and choice. Further, as the only two public high schools in Lowell governed by Lowell Public Schools, LHS and the Career Academy jointly participated in enrichment opportunities such as athletics, clubs, and other special programming.

Years Three through Five of implementation included reassessment of organizational needs and early outcomes, based on evaluation that includes student, family, community, and staff input as primary components. See Appendix for implementation timetable.

During Year Five, SY2020-2021,

IX. Measurable Annual Goals (See attached evaluation for progress toward goals as of SY19-20)

The Career Academy expects to achieve or exceed the following targets at Year 3 of the Innovation plan:

Attendance Goal (required):

Improve student engagement: Many students attending the Career Academy have chronic absenteeism, meaning they miss at least 10% of the school year. The Planning Team is interested in tracking students who have attended the Career Academy but do so inconsistently. The target for average daily attendance for these students is 80%. The current rate is 75% for October 1st through March 31st, 2016.

The above data excludes students who are on the roster as “active enrollment” but who have never stepped foot in the building once transferred from their sending school. These “no show” students negatively skew the official, full-roster average daily attendance data. The Innovation Plan referral protocol, which includes updated versions of the Referral and TAT forms (see Section 10 Attachments), aims to reduce the “no show” subgroup by ensuring student and family voice in the placement process. This would yield average daily attendance rates that more accurately represent student engagement at the Career Academy.

Average daily attendance for the Engagement Center is recorded but will not be included as a measure of the Attendance Goal due to the nature of the program as mastery, rather than seat-time oriented.

Student Graduation Goal (required):

Increase rate of graduation and/or successful transfer to another secondary educational placement: The Career Academy will graduate annually at least 50% of its current students included in the combined four and five year graduation cohorts according to data tracked by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). At least 50% of remaining students will either graduate after their five-year cohort date or successfully transfer to another secondary education placement.

Consistent with the personalized learning approach, the Career Academy will track an additional reporting category that includes all graduates regardless of how long it took them to complete their high school credential.

Maintain impact on low district dropout rate: The 2015 LPS high school dropout rate was a record low of 1.8%, reduced from 3.7% the previous year. This coincided with the Engagement Center’s rollout and the second year of the Career Academy’s transformation into a long-term student placement geared toward postsecondary readiness. The district has acknowledged that these programs are key to dropout prevention. To provide evidence to support this claim, the Center for Program Evaluation at the University of Massachusetts Lowell was hired to analyze the Full Service Community School initiative’s effect on dropout rate.

Student Safety and Disciplinary Goal (required):

Improve school culture by building on the Career Academy’s solid foundation of PBIS through developing and implementing Tier II and Tier III interventions evidenced by:

Increase the proportion of students that have a "low level" of office discipline referrals (0 to 10 per month) to 80%. The current average is 67% over the period of October 1st to March 31st.

Decrease total office discipline referrals by 15%.

Decrease overall out of school suspensions by 15%.

Student Academic Growth Goals (required)

Improve academic growth on MCAS: Given the Career Academy student population is on average 100% at-risk, the following goals apply to students in all subgroups (ELL, Special Education, low-income, etc).

Consistent with Lowell Public Schools targets, students who scored in the Warning and Needs Improvement categories on previous MCAS tests will achieve a median student growth percentile of at least 51% on subsequent MCAS tests within one calendar year of enrollment at the Career Academy.

At least 90% of eligible students will take the required MCAS test.

In addition, the Career Academy will begin compiling academic data on the following measures:

- the number of credits earned by each student per semester
- the number of classes passed as a collective student group
- the number students obtaining honor roll

After year one of this data collection, goals will be developed and agreed upon by the staff to measure growth and success of the Innovations programming.

Health and Wellness Goals

Students have access to health and wellness services: The percentage of Career Academy students actively receiving health, nutrition and wellness services will be 75% by Year 3, and 100% by Year 5. The current proportion is 35% over the period of October 1st to March 31st.

Family members and community residents are also targeted for health and wellness services. Their data is recorded in the FSCS evaluation.

Career Connections Goals

Students have access to employment and career services: The percentage of Career Academy students receiving internships, job training and career counseling services will be 75% by Year 3, and 100% by Year 5. The current proportion is 43% over the period of October 1st to March 31st.

Family members and community residents are also targeted for career services. Their data is recorded in the FSCS evaluation.

Community Connection Goals

Increase student, family, and neighbors' connection to their community: On a recent survey of Full Service Community School services conducted by University of Massachusetts, Lowell, 84% of the client satisfaction survey participants (32 of 34 individuals receiving wraparound services) believed that involvement in FSCS school-based programs increased their awareness of services available in their community. As the reach of these wraparound supports expands, the Career Academy aims to maintain a proportion of at least 80%.

X. Attachments

I. MyCareer and Academic Plan (2019) - WILL BE UPDATED TO INCLUDE ACADEMIC REAL-WORLD MAPPING

Name: Student A
DOB: 01/01/2001



Date: 01/01/2020
Grade: 12

My Career and Academic Plan

Part I: Self Exploration Interview Questions:

Work Experience and Career Pathway

Previous work experience		
Positions Held: 1) Cashier- 2017- Present 2) Camp Counselor 3) J-Squad Member	Employer Name 1) Market Basket 2) YWCA 3) Mill City Grows	References 1) Yes/No 2) Yes/No 3) Yes/No

Work Experience

- **Have you worked before (paid/unpaid)**
Student A has worked at Market Basket as a cashier for two years. The last two summers, he has worked as a camp counselor at YWCA and 'J-Squad' member at Mill City Grows.
- **Have you ever had job training? Received a credential/certificate? (food handling, OSHA, customer service, etc.)**
Student A has the OSHA 10/NCCER Certification.
- **What is the kind of environment you would like to work in?**
Student A is interested in picking up a second job. He would like to work in retail, specifically with shoes. He has inquired about positions at Olympia Sports and AWOL Boutique.

Your Ideal Job: Looking Ahead

- **What kind of work do you see yourself doing when you are 25?**
Since Student A's last "My Career and Academic Plan", he has maintained his desire to work as police officer. He wants to become a detective.
- **What kind of education or training is required to obtain that type of work?**

- Student A stated a degree is not necessary for becoming a police officer, but education significantly helps with professional development. He stated that military experience puts police officers in a position of advantage, due to the

- **Are you interested in education or training?**
Arniel expressed interest in education when it is applicable to his passions and goals. He believes he will enjoy college because you have freedom in what you decide to learn. However, he understands that programs require prerequisites in certain subjects, including Math, Science, and English.

- **What do you need to accomplish while in high school to meet those goals?**
Student A would like to work on passing his MCAS, specifically improve Geometry scores.

- **What could you work on this year to reach your goals?**
Student A admitted that he needs to improve his attendance and tardies. He drops off his brother everyday at school, which causes him to be late. Sometime he doesn't feel like going to school, but needs to remember his goal of graduating so he can be motivated to get there.

Career Exploration: Identifying Career Interests

Name 2 to 3 specific occupations you want to learn more about and possibly pursue. Selecting more than one helps you learn about and compare about different career options.

Interest # 1
Police Officer

Interest # 2
Fire Fighter

Interest # 3
Military Service

Part II: Plan Of Action

Post-Secondary Goal: Where do you hope to be after high school graduation?

Stated Goal: Following high school, I will be a Master of Criminal Justice graduate, own a home, maintain a small business, and travel.

Education/Training Plan

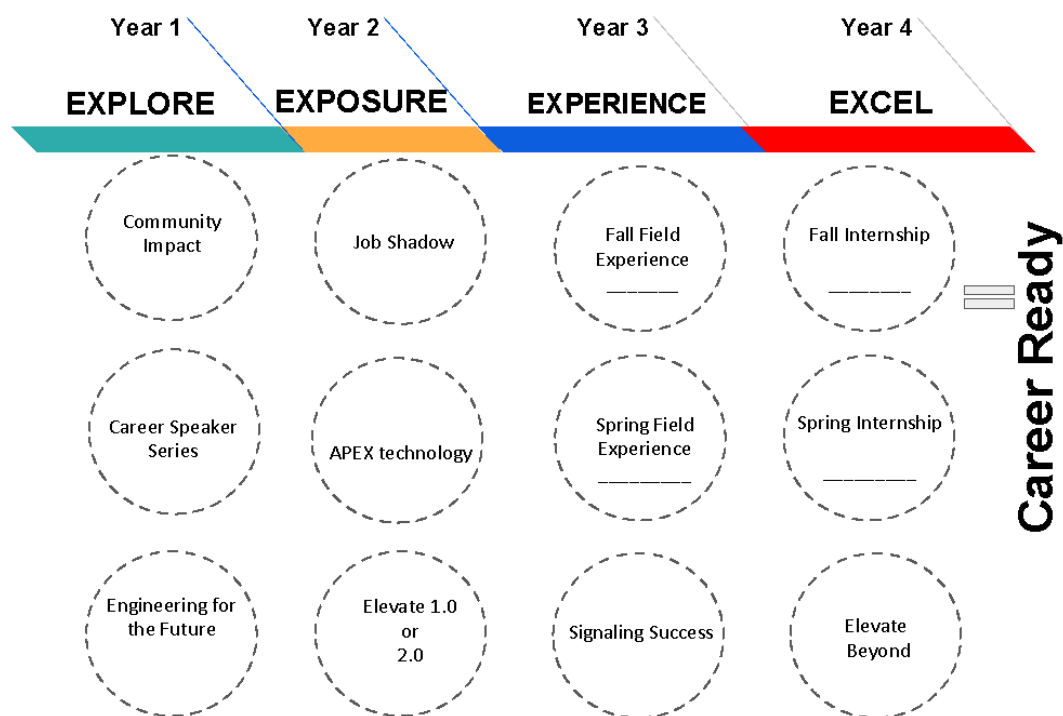
After High School Options	YES	NO
Attend a two- or four-year college/university	x	
Pursue technical training		x
Enter military	x	
Secure employment after graduation	x	
Enroll in a certificate program	x	

Part III: Timeline for Obtaining Goal and Future Career Pathway

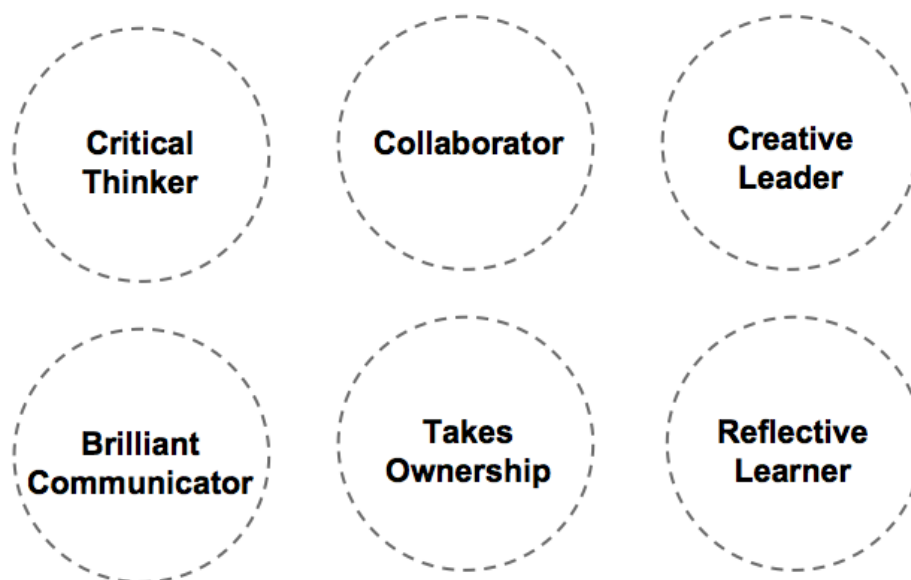
Short Term Goal <i>What can I do this month/this year?</i>	Action Steps <i>What can I do to get to my goal?</i>	Anticipated Completion Date	Long Term Goal <i>What can I do after high school?</i>
Research about MCC- CJ Program	Improve tardiness- improve time management, plan and organize responsibilities	End of Fall Semester 2019	F/T Job College graduate- Criminal Justice Save \$\$\$ Start own business and maintain, while working as a detective

Example of Short Term Goal	Example of Action Step	Example of Long-Term Goal
Become familiar with the college application process/majors	Complete a practice application for college	Attend a four year college to pursue a career in engineering
Research occupation of interest	Job shadow, informational interview, narrow focus in field	Complete a training program, get certified, obtain employment
Research military occupations	Informational interview, network with veteran, visit recruiting center	Enlist in the military
Improve my academic performance by a grade letter	Asking help from teachers, schedule in time to study	Graduate high school
Research medical assistant positions	Make an appt. w/ career advisor to discuss certificate programs	Pass certification exam, become a medical assistant

Career Ready Skills Badges



Career Ready Mindset Badges



Adapted from The Career Academy's Community Impact Project Rubric, can be designed by students

Lowell Career Academy Graduation Road Map

Student Name	
Anticipated Year of Graduation	

Humanities	ELA 1A	ELA 1B	ELA 2A	ELA 2B	ELA 3A	ELA 3B	ELA 4A	ELA 4B	US Hist 1A	US Hist 1B	US Hist 2A	US Hist 2B

STEM	Alg 1A	Alg 1B	Geo A	Geo B	Bio A	Bio B	Science Elective	Science Elective


Wellness	Health A	Health B	PE	PE

Electives												

EPP Require ment <i>(only if needed)</i>	Math 4A	Math 4B	
MCAS	English	Math	Science

May count for elective credits

Students need a minimum of 90 credits AND all above subject areas filled.

Early College	English	Math	IDS	IDS	IDS	Intern	Pathway:
							

II. Partner Wraparound Services of the [Lowell Community School Model](#)

The Career Academy provides wraparound partner services to students, families, and community members to address needs of the whole child and support long-term success.

Sample Wraparound Service Programs

Bike Connector

Open to students, family, and community members

Partner: The Bike Connector

Earn-A-Bike program facilitates group rides and bike clinics, maintenance and repair workshops and hundreds of free refurbished bikes and helmets to students, family, and community members.

Career Pathways

Open to students, family, and community members

Partner: Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board and the Career Center of Lowell

Staff from the local workforce agency holds office hours onsite two days per week to provide My Career and Academic Plan development, work-readiness workshops, internships and part-time and summer jobs.

Carpentry Internship (Discontinued in 2021 due to funding)

Open to Students

Partner: Community Teamwork, Inc. /YouthBuild Lowell

Students earn internship credits toward their high school diploma, as well as multiple carpentry credentials in this semester long course.

Early College Dual Enrollment

Partners: Middlesex Community College (MCC), Elevate and Career Academy Teachers

Students complete experiential and project-based work in three one-credit Interdisciplinary Studies courses: Service Learning, Career Explorations, and First Year Experience. Open to all students.

The Engagement Center

Open to current or former high school students who have senior standing, as well as students who are suspended out of school.

The Engagement Center, an afternoon and evening program that offers credit recovery and hybrid tutoring for senior-status students who are unable to attend traditional school hours.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Open to community members and families

Partners: Lowell Abisi Adult Education Center and Christ Jubilee International Ministries

Community members enroll in a free ESOL course provided by and held three times per week at the church adjacent to the school.

Family Services

Open to students and families

Partners: Department of Family Services, Department of Youth Services (courts), Lowell Police Department, mental health partners

Connection to these wraparound social services is facilitated by a team of school staff including Social Worker, Principal, and mentoring partners.

Food Pantry

Open to community members and families

Partners: Merrimack Valley Food Bank, Mill City Grows, Christ Jubilee International Ministries
Career Academy and Lower Highlands residents may receive food every Friday afternoon at Christ Jubilee. Items range from produce to canned food from the Merrimack Valley Food Bank, soon to be supplemented by fresh harvest from Mill City Grows.

Garden and Nutrition Education

Open to students, families, and community members

Partners: Mill City Grows

Students receive in ongoing co-curricular, hands on gardening and nutrition education with Mill City Grows during their biology and health classes.

Martial Arts Training and Healthy Living

Open to Students

Partners: Green Dragons

Green Dragons is a during and afterschool fitness course that teaches martial arts, extreme conditioning, healthy eating and growing food.

Vision Care

Open to students, families, community members

Partner: New England Eye, 2020 Onsite

Comprehensive eye examinations and glasses via onsite mobile vision clinic. Patients had failed multiple vision screenings over the course of several years, but had never gone to a follow-up appointment with their local eye doctor. After their visit to the Vision Van, students choose and receive a free pair of glasses. Many report that they could see clearly for the first time in years.

Youth Council

Open to students.

Partner: Elevate New England

Students meet weekly to plan and execute school improvement and culture activities, as well as consult on FSCS progress and direction.

Innovation Plan Certification Statement
ORIGINAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVAL JUNE 2016

Proposed Innovation School Name:	Lowell Career Academy
Proposed City/Town Location:	Lowell, MA

Names of innovation plan committee members (no more than 11 individuals) selected in accordance with state law:

Affiliation	Name	Vote (yes or no)
Lead applicant:	Margaret Ferrick	YES
Superintendent or designee:	Patricia Guziejka	YES
School committee member or designee:	Jackie Doherty	YES
Parent who has one or more children enrolled in the school, or in the case of a new school, in the district:	Chhaya Uong	YES
Teacher employed by district (selected from among volunteers)	Lauren Keating	YES
Teacher employed by district (selected from among nominees submitted by the local teacher's union)	Jennifer Hartigan	YES
Member:	Marge McDevitt	YES
Member:	Jennifer McCrystal	YES
Member:	LZ Nunn	YES
Member:	Megan O'Loughlin	YES
Member:	Roxane Howe	YES

I hereby certify that the information submitted in this innovation plan is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and has been approved by a majority vote of the innovation plan committee.

Lead Applicant Member Margaret Ferrick Date 6/05/2016

Approved Implementation Timeline – June 2016

Activity	Date
New personnel acquired and trained where applicable	June–August 2016
Learning management system for competency-based assessment acquired (Jump Rope or BDEA Connections, to be decided by Innovation Planning Team)	June 2016 August 2016
Staff trained in learning management system	
Introduction, partner service registration, and suggestion box at the Career Academy Back to School community block party	September 2016
School autonomies implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Redesigning student teacher time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Current: extended day program, modified day ○ New: online learning lab during school day, staggered starts, expanded internship opportunities and extended day program ● Blended and personalized learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Current: online learning, project-based learning ○ New: competency based education ● Wraparound services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Current: Social, health and wellness, post-secondary education, employment, and academic services offered on-site through community partners ○ New: expansion of above services 	Year 1; SY 2016–2017
Guidance Counselor and Resource Teacher staff members acquired at minimum of part-time basis	Year 1; SY 2016–2017
Quarterly family and community engagement events, monthly School Site Council meetings, and weekly Youth Council meetings advertise service offerings and collect public input	SYs 2016–2021
Innovation implementation evaluated annually for success toward measurable annual goals (Section IX)	Year 3-5; SY 2018-2021